

broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Lt. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, USA, acting commander, U.S. Central Command; Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 19.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr.

May 19, 2008

Secretary Paulson, thanks for coming. And I just got back from the Middle East, and the Secretary came over to talk about the economy and how he sees it. And we're working through tough times, and I appreciate the leadership you're providing.

He did assure me that the refund checks are heading out; people are getting that money. And that's good. It should help our economy and, more importantly, help people pay their bills. And we hope people use that money and take care of their families and shop.

I also asked him how he was doing in helping people stay in their homes. We spent time talking about the housing industry. And one of the really impressive programs has been the HOPE NOW program. Secretary Paulson has taken the lead in—to help people refinance and help people get the financial help necessary to stay in homes. And that help comes in all different kinds of ways, but generally, it just means that the lending institutions are—help a creditworthy person stay in their home, and that's what we want to have happen.

Since the program started, 1.4 million people got mortgage relief so they can stay in their homes. And in the first quarter of this year, 500,000 households, 500,000 families were helped.

And I appreciate your leadership on that, Hank. It's been—our policy in this administration is, we—laws shouldn't bail out lenders; laws shouldn't help speculators; the Gov-

ernment ought to be helping creditworthy people stay in their homes. And one way we can do that—and Congress is making progress on this—is the reform of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. That reform will come with a strong, independent regulator.

The Secretary is briefing me on the progress being made on the Hill on this very important subject. Our fellow citizens have got to know that these major players in the mortgage markets, if reformed properly by Congress, will really help stabilize the markets and make it easier for people to stay in their homes.

And we look forward to working with Congress to get a good piece of legislation to my desk that helps our fellow citizens and helps us get through this housing issue.

So, Mr. Secretary, thank you for your briefing. I appreciate very much your leadership on the issue.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on the Earthquake in China

May 20, 2008

Laura and I have come to the Chinese Embassy. Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much. Madam, thank you very much. We've come to express our country's condolences for those who mourn for the loved ones.

We stand ready to help in any way that the Chinese Government would like. We know there's great courage being displayed, Mr. Ambassador, as rescue workers search for those who may still be living.

This natural disaster is very hard on many of your people, and we understand that. And we extend our deepest sympathies and pray for recovery and pray for the strength of those who are—whose lives have been torn apart during this terrible tragedy.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 a.m. at the Embassy of China. In his remarks, he referred to China's Ambassador to the U.S. Zhou Wenzhong and his wife, Xie Shumin.

Statement on Senator Edward M. Kennedy

May 20, 2008

Laura and I are concerned to learn of our friend Senator Kennedy's diagnosis. Ted Kennedy is a man of tremendous courage, remarkable strength, and powerful spirit. Our thoughts are with Senator Kennedy and his family during this difficult period. We join our fellow Americans in praying for his full recovery.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of G. Steven Agee as United States Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit

May 20, 2008

Today Members of the Senate voted unanimously to confirm Justice Steven Agee to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. I appreciate their work on his nomination. Justice Agee is a man of integrity who is respected for his sound legal judgment and commitment to equal justice for all Americans. His work on the Supreme Court of Virginia and the Virginia Court of Appeals demonstrates that his rulings are based on the letter of the law. I am confident that he will serve on the fourth circuit with the same level of dedication and professionalism.

After I nominated Justice Agee on March 13, 2008, he received a hearing and a confirmation vote in less than 3 months. Unfortunately, many of my other judicial nominees have not received a timely confirmation process, and their nominations have been pending before the Senate Judiciary Committee for significantly longer.

Since the beginning of the 110th Congress, the Senate has only confirmed eight circuit court nominees. In the last 2 years of the past 3 administrations, the Senate has confirmed an average of 17 circuit court judges. I encourage the Senate to provide all judicial nominees with a swift and fair confirmation process.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq

May 20, 2008

On May 22, 2003, by Executive Order 13303, I declared a national emergency protecting the Development Fund for Iraq and certain other property in which Iraq has an interest, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) (IEEPA). I took this action to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq.

In Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, Executive Order 13350 of July 29, 2004, Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004, and Executive Order 13438 of July 17, 2007, I modified the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13303 and amended the steps taken pursuant to it.

Because the obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on May 22, 2003, and the measures adopted on that date, August 28, 2003, July 29, 2004, November 29, 2004, and July 17, 2007, to deal with that emergency must continue in effect beyond May 22, 2008. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 20, 2008.